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Communism

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COMMUNISM.*

FROM THE

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BY

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COMMUNISM.

COMMUNISM is one of the terms which have been applied to the various classes of projects for re-organizing society, and subjecting men to a more or less strict system of regulations calculated, as their framers maintain, to promote human welfare. It is impossible to give a scientific definition of the word Communism, any more than of Socialism or other miscellaneous terms, in which groups of varying theories and projects are colloquially referred to. The influence which these projects have from time to time exercised upon mankind, and their late tragic connection with European history, render it necessary that some notice of them should be found in a work of general reference. It will be seen presently that it is convenient to bring them all under one head; and the word Communism presents itself as preferable to any other, because it applies generally to the highest developments which artificial systems have aimed at. It thus includes the minor within the greater projects, and admits of the general review of the whole question between artificial systems and the natural laws of society. Under the head of Communism it is usual to class those organizations which propose to adjust the whole conduct of the human being, and not only to regulate property, industry, and the sources of livelihood, but also to revolutionize the domestic relations and the social morals of mankind. The less unpopular term

of Socialism is generally applied to a revolution in the laws of property and the organization of labour. But no such distinction is fully established, and all the views and projects of the re-organizers run more or less into each other. Investigation lays open an indefinite series of schemes, from the vast projects for taking possession of the new-born infant, and subjecting him to a strict daily and hourly discipline through life, down through an indefinite gradation of organizing schemes, until we reach projects of pauper management or of joint-stock partnership, which may be merely spoken of as carrying in their nature a tinge of socialism. To give under the head of each separate artificial system—as, for instance, under Phalanstery, St-Simonianism, Fourierism, or Owenism—a specific account of the minutiae of each system thus propounded, after the manner in which an account is given of the several sciences and philosophical systems, is the course which would naturally give most satisfaction to the supporters of each scheme ; for, as there has been little good understanding among the several projectors, and each has generally attacked the others, an inquiry in which their systems are mixed up with each other would be received as a confusion of truth with falsehood, and of sagacity with quackery. But if it were desirable to describe each system to the satisfaction of its supporters, it would be scarcely practicable. Fourier's alone might occupy years of study ; and he himself maintained to the last that none, even of his most ardent disciples, rightly understood his system in all its complexity ; there was always something or other overlooked in its intricate machinery, which, like the absence of some essential wheel in a complex piece of clock-work, disorganized the whole.

Even, however, if each system could be satisfactorily pursued through all its ramifications and laid distinctly before the reader, it does not appear that the result would justify the labour and space necessary for the object. A question antecedent to any question as to the merits of the details of

each system is, whether a case is made out for artificial intervention at all—whether nature has not established laws which accomplish the object in view better than any projects which human ingenuity can devise.

It is to the social laws developed by the domestic relations, and to those wider and less rigid principles of action which are indicated by the science of political economy, that we go to find the system on which it has pleased the Deity to provide that mankind should live. It is true that, in investigating the true principles which rule the domestic relations, inquirers may, as in scientific investigations of any kind, make mistakes ; and they are perhaps still more liable to err when they investigate the laws of political economy, and endeavour to distinguish what they are sufficient from what they are insufficient to accomplish. But both systems proceed upon the belief that there are laws of social and economic development, as there are laws of mineral crystallization, or of animal and vegetable physiology ; and to find out these laws is the constant endeavour of all social and political economists.

The propounders of communistic or socialistic projects, on the other hand, deny the existence of the whole or of a great part of such a system—maintain that man is living in chaos, and offer to regulate him and put him into shape as so much inorganic matter. As a simple example, social economy says that in the general case parents ought to have the adjustment of their childrens' destiny left in their hands, because a law of nature makes them love their offspring and desire its welfare ; and though there may be exceptional cases, yet the law of family affection is so general that a reliance on it affords a better chance of accomplishing the desired object than any artificial arrangement. On the other hand, a communist will maintain that children ought to be immediately removed from their parents and brought up by a committee of management, because, to use the words of Robert Owen, “the affections of parents for their

own children are too strong for their judgments ever to do justice to themselves, their children, or the public, in the education of their own children, even if private families possessed the machinery—which they never do—to well manufacture character from birth."

To take another simple example from political economy. This science teaches us that the best means of supplying mankind with the material objects of their desire is to leave the function to the spirit of commercial competition, and to secure an absolute property in the fruits of industry to those who bring them into existence. On the other hand, Louis Blanc says that commercial competition is a source of misery and degradation, while Prudhon says property is robbery, and each desires to adjust the whole matter according to an organization of his own.

Those therefore who believe in the truth of political economy cannot admit that there is any need for the projects of the socialists and communists, and consequently cannot admit that there is any necessity for studying and developing the ramifications of each system, and showing precisely where they differ and agree, or wherein one is preferable to the other. Hence it is that, proceeding upon the basis that the principles of political economy express with more or less accuracy certain natural laws which it is unnecessary to supersede, it is not considered necessary to investigate the ultimate arrangements of each projector's system; and so it has been deemed expedient to treat here merely of the primary question between the natural system and the artificial systems.

For the whole matter receiving attention to this extent in a work like the present, there are various reasons. In the first place, late European events have made the projects of the socialists and communists a part of the history of the world. But further still, at the point where the plans of the artificial projectors depart from the received doctrines of political economy, they are an important means of testing the accuracy of these doctrines by the application of a sort

of *experimentum crucis*. Hence the readers of socialist works often say that the system, as a system, is unsound, yet there is some truth in its foundation ; while what they really mean is, that there is some mistake or defect in the received doctrines of political economy for which the inventor is offering an artificial remedy. Wherever opinions in favour of these artificial systems prevail—and in later times they have occasionally prevailed to a sufficiently alarming extent—there must be something wrong in the condition of the people. There is some error in the political economy which rules their actions, and either they are improperly interfered with, or they are so neglected that the true laws of nature have not freedom to develop themselves. One organic defect developed in nearly all the instances where such projects become popular, is an extent of popular ignorance, rendering the laws of political economy nugatory among a people who cannot understand even their simplest rudiments. From such causes, the social and communistic movements with which the world has been occasionally visited are, taken collectively, an interesting and valuable object of inquiry.

The literature of this department of inquiry is indefinite, since it blends itself with theology, ethics, politics, political economy, and history. Every one who proposes anything for the improvement of mankind is liable to come within the category, if, instead of aiding nature, his project should propose to supersede her laws. Hence communistic literature covers all the range from such vast plans of reconstruction as Fourier's or St Simon's, down to the pamphlet on Pauper Management, which may become liable to the suspicion of communism. The great conceptions or plans of government which have from time to time appeared, generally mix up an artificial organization with that which is in actual operation ; and sometimes the former character so entirely preponderates, and carries the whole project so far out of the course of actual practice and probability, that it is set

down as a fanciful dream, of which the author never anticipated the realization. Such is the Utopia of Sir Thomas More, which has afforded a term for characterizing impossible or preposterous schemes. Some of the French writers are proud of saying, that the great dispute between socialism and political economy—between the world as it should be made, and the world as it is—began when Plato wrote his *Republic*, and Aristotle in his *Politics* bent his powerful practical mind to the examination of the actual condition and political organization of mankind. The *Republic* of Cicero, from which the world expected important views on government, supplied from the practice of Rome, embodied the Platonic vagueness ; and the same spirit has pervaded the works of a multitude of writers on political philosophy. It has to be observed, that before it can give expression to a distinct theory of communism, the press must be free, or in a state of defiance, because in proposing a new plan of organization, it proposes to supersede the government of the day. Hence it was in the midst of the great contest in England in the seventeenth century, that the boldest practical opinions were expressed in such works as the *Leviathan* of Hobbes and the *Oceana* of Harrington. When works like Rousseau's *Social Contract* were popular, it may be said that the French press was in a state of licensed rebellion, since under despotic rule, opinions of the most anarchical and revolutionary character were promulgated with such systematic calmness, as if the possibility of their being adopted and carried into practice were not to be entertained. In France, since the first revolution, while the press has sometimes been controlled, yet opportunities have been afforded from time to time for issuing such works as have to be presently noticed. In 1848, not only in France, but throughout Germany, a current of socialistic literature broke out. It has now been forced back again, and there is no freedom on the Continent to publish communistic doctrines. In Britain the whole question has been left

freely to develop itself, with what effect we shall presently see.

Communistic arrangements have been from time to time in partial practical operation among isolated bodies of men, and the character of this partiality of operation is peculiarly instructive. The most illustrious example is that of the Spartan discipline. From his cradle to his grave, the Lacedæmonian citizen was regulated in all his movements by the state. He had no home or family. When the state permitted him to marry, it adjusted his conjugal intercourse, and might temporarily or permanently transfer his rights to another person. Everything was adjusted to the production and training of healthy and strong men fit for the war-like service of the state. The men living in separate barracks were, if possible, not to be acquainted with their children by sight, lest, according to the view resuscitated by Mr Owen, paternal weakness might interfere with the rigid character of public discipline. At the sysitia or public mess, there was a meal renowned for its frugality distributed with impartial uniformity to rich and poor. Competition in trade was rendered impossible, since no commercial or productive pursuits could be followed by free citizens; and, in reality, there was no money or circulating medium, the celebrated iron coin being rather a practical sarcasm on the gold and silver of other states, than a substitute for them. With all their elaborate and stern enforcement of equality, Spartan citizens had however in some way the command of wealth, and they were divided like the rest of mankind into the rich and the poor. But their great inequality which carried off all the social difficulties of their complicated organization was their vast system of slavery. As not only servile drudgery, but productive commerce, and, it might be said, all the arts of peace, were committed to the helot class, their numbers and capacity made them powerful, and only a ceaseless watchfulness and severity interspersed with some acts of ferocious cruelty kept them from reversing the social order. In fact,

this instance goes with others of minor moment, to show that to the extent to which there is artificial organization, there must be a corresponding amount of slavery or coercion, since men must be forced to do that which it is not lawful to bribe them by competitive pecuniary recompense to do. The philosophy of the Spartan example was in the mind of a Scottish workman, who, when a brilliant communist lecturer had finished his description of the uniformity and happiness of his parallelogram, stood up and said, "but whae's to dee the durty wark." The lecturer ingeniously pointed to the number of primarily disagreeable occupations which men may be induced to undertake without payment—as when the anatomist handles macerating garbage, and the sportsman pursues the chase of the unprofitable wild beast through cold and heat, wet and hunger. But whatever speculators may anticipate as to the future of human nature, it is a fact as to the past and present visible every day, that there are services, and these important to human happiness, that nothing but coercion or pecuniary inducement will extract.

Among the practical instances of artificial organization in later times, we may cite the guilds and other associations of traders and artificers whose peculiar privileges have scarcely yet entirely disappeared, while they are in some measure virtually revived by trade-unions and combinations. Their object was to suppress competition and freedom of action; but it was so far different from such views as those of Owen and Louis Blanc, that, instead of providing some substitute for competition of which all were to reap the advantage, the object was to confine all the benefits of trade or productive industry to a chosen few, exclusive of the rest of the world. Thus, so long as they were sufficiently powerful to retain their privileges and suppress external competition, they possessed a compactness which enabled them to enforce their internal restrictions and obligations as the price paid for the possession of lucrative privileges. In other words, as it was

more profitable for a man to belong to a corporation, though it restricted him from competing with its other members, than it would be for him to compete with the world at large, he assented to restrictions ; and submission to them in these instances does not show that the world at large will ever consent to accept and obey them.

The power of religion has in many instances acted as that force which will keep men in associative action on principles contrary to the natural laws of society. It is not difficult to imagine the early Christians in small clusters, with the firmest reliance in each other and in the continual fear of persecution, enjoying all things in common. The monastic establishments were communistic institutions, and they infused a tinge of their character into the early universities. Relics of its tone may still be found even lingering in such uncongenial ground as Cambridge and Oxford. The monastic communities, however, attempted by their organization to supply only a portion of that which nature does by social laws. They cut off entirely those relations of husband and wife, and of parent and child, which, as they are in themselves the most complex and powerful portion of the natural organization, are of course the least easily accomplished by the artificial. There are some small communities at present in America, such as the Shakers, who, exacting the same observance of celibacy, manage, through a system of communism, to supply within the limited sphere of operation left to it the natural laws of society. Their orderly habits, and the success with which their agricultural operations have been pursued, have often been cited in support of communistic principles. It was chiefly by religious influence that the Jesuits established their empire in Paraguay, where their authority was not merely that of a government, but extended over the social direction and organization of the peculiar people among whom they established their mission. The classes of religious societies scattered through central Europe, and known as Moravians, Bohemians,

mian Brethren, or Herrnhuters, in a similar manner derive the power of social organization, so effectively exercised by them, from a religious source. The pressure of persecution has imparted to them a species of social compactness often exemplified in isolated religious bodies. The Huguenots of France, for instance, the Vendean of the revolution, the Waldenses of the seventeenth century, and the Covenanters of Scotland, submitted to an amount of moral discipline from their proscribed and hunted priesthood, to which the followers of an established or protected clergy will rarely submit ; for there are none to whom censure or the deprivation of privileges is so formidable as to those who brave persecution for the sake of belonging to a religious communion. A very remarkable instance of the organizing power of religious authority, especially when strengthened by persecution, has been exhibited in the late history of the American Mormons ; and, to make it the more emphatic, its potency has exhibited itself in direct and immediate contrast with the feebleness of pure communism as an artificial system of temporal organization. Through the spiritual power which they had established, the leaders of the sect, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, exacted so ready and implicit an obedience, that they were really able to accomplish that distribution of functions which the social organizers strive after in vain. The man whose assigned function it was to dig this drain, or plough yonder field, or weed, or make a fence, went to his duty unresisting, and did it with all his heart. It was thus that, when they set their foot on the desert, they surrounded themselves with the fruits of skilled industry, and assumed the character of an old and permanently organized community with almost miraculous celerity. But when they were driven from their possessions in Nauvoo, and a body of French communists took their place, these, far from rivalling the industrial organization of their predecessors, had not even enough of that quality to preserve the fruit of their predecessors' labours ; and, in the hands of

the new-comers, the cultivated fields of the Mormons lapsed again into a wilderness.

The communists, whose failure proved so signal a contrast to the practical ability of the most preposterous fanatics of the day, were led to form a settlement in America by the bold persuasions of M. Cabet, who was afterwards tried and punished for the sufferings he had occasioned to them. Icaria, the place selected for the great experiment, was on the Red River, a tributary of the Mississippi, dividing Arkansas from the newly annexed state of Texas. He professed to have there purchased a million of acres of land; and the most alluring descriptions were given of its beauty and fertility, and its capability not only of providing for all the sordid wants of ordinary mankind, but of ministering affluently to the enjoyment both of the senses and of the intellect. The classes who are usually attracted by emigration schemes, as offering them a life in contrast with their uneasy struggle at home, were charmed with the prospect. Soon after a small body had put themselves into M. Cabet's hands, the colony was represented as in active existence, and in the full enjoyment of all the promised elements of subsistence and luxury. It had its organ called *La Populaire*, and was trumpeted both in France and by the socialist organs in Britain. While the scheme had as yet a scarcely defined existence, the revolution of February 1848 swept past. The hurricane would have obliterated any ordinary social scheme in the hands of ordinary social reformers, but the Icarians seized the tide of socialism, and made their project so prominent that 500 eligible emigrants were obtained. The first condition of adoption into the new republic was a startling one—the emigrant required to give up all his property into the hands of M. Cabet the president. Some entertained misgivings as to their position, but did not act on them until it was too late to retreat, for the author of the scheme had furnished himself with the means for compulsory enforcement. After a miserable voyage, the emi-

grants, in extreme wretchedness, arrived at New Orleans, where they expected to find their promised land. Instead of it, they met with a few of their wretched fellow-countrymen, portions of the advanced party, who could find no Icaria, or any other place where they were permitted to occupy land without paying a high price for it. A portion of the 500 proceeded on the voyage up the Mississippi with their president. They had a land journey of between two and three hundred miles, which but a small portion of them accomplished, several dying by the way, while others made their escape to France. Those who reached Icaria found only a desert, with a few ruined huts, and an abundance of graves.

Finding that the land, such as it was, did not belong to M. Cabet, and that its owners demanded for it a price far beyond their means, the unhappy remnant of the expedition adopted the idea of taking possession of the still warm nest whence the Mormons had been driven by the wrath of their neighbours; but at Nauvoo their failure was so immediate that they scarcely left behind them a trace of their occupancy, and the fields on which the Mormons were becoming rich reverted almost to a state of nature in their hands.

From the incidental communism to be found scattered throughout general literature, or exemplified here and there in the manner in which we have just seen it on a small and isolated scale, it is a great step to go to the consideration of those vast systems which have been designed in our own day for the complete reconstruction of society. France is, as the world has had too much reason to know, their great productive emporium. The two patriarchs of these systems are Fourier and St Simon, two men of whom each entertained towards the other and his opinions that unmitigated contempt which it is the peculiar character of social organizers to entertain for the works of each other. They were men of totally different habits and character, and though at

a distance their systems might appear to be so much alike that they would naturally have blended with each other, they took their separate courses with their respective clusters of disciples, as distinctly as two rivers from the same mountain chain pursue their courses to opposite coasts.

Of Fourier and his system it is difficult to speak, since, as already has been observed, it is so complex that he never admitted that even his most ardent disciples understood it, and to the last he would sanction nothing as an announcement of his views which he had not himself written. It may suffice to say, that those who have glanced at his writings have been astonished to find how far they have differed from all anticipation of their contents, and from all other systems of artificial human organization. Instead of the dry details of industrial training and household economy, the reader finds himself in a gorgeous imaginative world, overloaded with an exuberance of sensual and intellectual joys, such as an oriental sage might picture in his opium dreams.

His theories were almost in wider contrast with the realities of his own life than with the writings of the other communists. He spent the greater part of his days as a humble drudge in a commercial office, living frugally on a small income, and writing books which startled the few who could be prevailed on to read them, by their vast theories and the rich and ingenious imagination which peopled them with wonderful and captivating analogies. They were of the kind of writing which, once admitted at all, is accepted implicitly like a revelation ; and though those who gave ear to him were but few, yet among these few were some zealous and fanatical believers.

Fourier was born in the year 1772, and it was about the year 1825, when he was upwards of fifty years old, that he appears to have enrolled his earliest disciples. The revolution of 1830 afforded a hearing in France for all who had startling social novelties to proclaim ; and Fourier then began to gather a popular audience. Out of comparative ob-

security he thus rose to an extent of popularity and power which astonished men more conversant with the ordinary world, and induced them to look to theories of social organization as a more promising field of enterprise, than it had seemed to be in a country so entirely under the subjection of immediate practical influence as France. Fourier found, however, that there were rivals to his popularity, and his system, founded on calculations which he maintained to be the counterpart of Newton's physical system, was in his eyes the true science which admitted of no contradiction or divergence. Hence he thought it necessary to warn the world against the efforts of fools and impostors, by the publication in 1831 of his *Pièges et Charlatanisme des deux sectes, St Simon et Owen*. He received soon afterwards more effective opposition in an attempt to put his theories into practice. Nothing, indeed, could be better fitted to dispel the gorgeous visions which he created in his studious retirement, than the vulgar exigencies of a set of people brought together to struggle with the difficulties of a new method of living; and thus, when his friends collected a considerable sum of money to begin the system of phalanges with which he promised to celestialize the human race, his instinct made him deprecate the attempt, and disownance it as premature. The experiment of a practical embodiment of Fourierism failed according to the universal expectation of those not engaged in it; Fourier himself expecting that it would fail from deficiency of Fourierism, and the rest of the world anticipating its fall from a superfluity of that quality. The experiment was made in the neighbourhood of the small town of Rambouillet, easily approached from Paris. The sum expended on it has been calculated at L.20,000. Fourier was pretty far advanced in life when the attempt was made, and he died soon afterwards, in the autumn of 1837.

If his writings had been less elaborate and diffuse than they were found to be, the socialist impulse connected with

the French revolution of 1848 might have made them very popular. Many interpretations and digests of them were then published, a few of them finding their way into British periodical literature. It is understood, however, that the greater part of his works still remain in manuscript, as they were deposited in the Phalansterian Academy at Paris.

Fourier professed to be a believer in revelation ; but he practically dispensed with another world, since his system accomplished the perfection of happiness in this. When it was fully developed it was to be the third dispensation—counting the establishment of Christianity as the second. In one of his own expressive analogies, mankind was when he wrote (and would be still held by him to be) in the first or chrysalis state, which he expresses by the term *civilisée*; but when the system of harmony is accomplished, his development will be perfected with a metempsychosis as striking and beautiful as the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into the butterfly. He had a peculiar method of bringing out his grand results, by multiplying the passions and their gratifications by each other, so as to produce square or cubical quantities of felicity rational and sensual, while he was able entirely to dispense with all elements of frailty or reaction. In contrasting the state of man “in harmony” with his *civilisée* condition, he certainly drew the imperfections and frailties which protrude through modern civilization with a potent pen ; and there are few such vivid pictures of the effects of filthy and careless living, bad air, and degrading habits, as those drawn by Fourier. Yet man’s escape from them is not to be in a purification of the soul from the passions and propensities of the body, but in a compound multiplication of their intensity and fruition ; so that the earth is to be a sensual paradise of unceasing enjoyment.

To accomplish this consummation, the rapid perfectibility of mankind was to be accomplished by cosmical developments, of such a startling kind as we would expect to have excited an incredulous smile in the most devoted fol-

lower. His system of full enjoyment seems to have required the creation of new natural elements, and especially the existence of animals capable of conveying mankind with increased fleetness from place to place—and here his followers have given him credit for having anticipated results, though he was not quite precise as to the means, since rapid transit has been accomplished by railways and steam-ships, instead of the new animals of the lion and the whale kind, who were in "Harmony" to be subjected to the will of man. Some of his other cosmical views are so extraordinary, that we shall only venture to give them in a quotation from the curious introductory essay of his chief English exponent, who speaks rather as an admirer than a believer.

"The planets procreate their own species, but their functions of creative industry consist in furnishing each other with the various types of animal and vegetable life, which live and grow upon the surface of each globe respectively. Thus all the moons and planets of our solar system have contributed to the creations of our globe, in the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms. The elephant, the oak, and the diamond, were created by the sun; the horse, the lily, and the ruby, were created by Saturn; the cow, the jonquil, and the topaz, were created by Jupiter; the dog, the violet, and opal stones, were created by our earth itself; and all the moons and planets have created special series, classes, orders, and varieties of animals, vegetables, and minerals upon our globe, and also on each moon and planet of our solar system." (Doherty's Introduction to *The Passions of the Human Soul*, by Charles Fourier, p. 14.) The system of phalanges or phalansteries formed as it were, the Jacob's ladder which connected such cloudy speculations with the sublunary earth. Reserving these as esoteric revelations to the initiated, he plied the ordinary public of France with seductive descriptions of the economic influence of his primary organization—an organization which would, he maintained, if once begun, prove itself so benefi-

cent that it could never lose its hold on mankind, but must be carried out indefinitely until the great system of "Harmony" was completed over the earth.

Each phalange or phalanstery was to consist of 400 families, or 1800 persons; this estimate rested on minute and certain calculations, which, like Newton's, were incapable of deceiving. Each was to be held in 1128 shares—a number derived from equally certain calculations. Of these, five-twelfths were to go to labour, four-twelfths to capital, and three-twelfths to skill or talent. The phalange was to include everything in structure and character which could gratify the highest taste and sense of enjoyment. In the meantime, however, before the whole earth was covered with phalanges, each multiplying the enjoyment-creating potency of the others, the efficacy of the system was to be established by its subsidation of the human passions to its service. The pursuits and functions of the members of the phalange were to be infallibly adjusted through a distribution, by which each person was to be set precisely to that function in life to which his passions and propensities directed him. Life at the phalange was thus to be perpetual enjoyment, and everything tending to supply the comforts, luxuries, and felicities of life was to be ceaselessly produced by men who, instead of labouring with the sweat of the brow, were to be all the time as fully indulging their own passions and pleasures as the hunter when he hears the view halloo, or the gambler when he is gaining a fortune, or the philosopher when he is achieving some great discovery.

When the principles of an existence of supreme and inexhaustible enjoyment were applied to the intercourse of the sexes, and "the condition of woman in Harmony," they naturally assumed a character calculated to create astonishment and indignation. The vindication put forth by the pupils of the system was, that in harmony man is to be divested of the vice and grossness which attend on the unlimited indulgence of his passions in his present state, and that

then the same wretched precautions by which our imperfect morality is now fenced round will no longer be necessary. In attestation of his sincerity they refer to his opinion that some three or four generations would require to live under something like the existing restraints, until mankind had acquired the proper development for full and at the same time pure enjoyment.

Persons taking a glance at the great French schemers at a distance, and without any prejudice in favour of one over the other, will find a rival to Fourier in one whom his disciples would have hooted from any claim to equality as loudly as the St-Simonians would have scorned the Fourierists.

St Simon, born in the year 1760, was descended of one of the most illustrious houses of the old noblesse of France, and his system was pervaded by the aristocratic tendencies of his birth and education. His family claimed descent from Charlemagne, and he said that the emperor had appeared to him in a dream, and told him that his race having produced a *grand monarque*, was also to produce a *grand philosophe*. When a young cavalry officer, his servant was instructed to awaken him in the morning with the injunction, "Arise, Sir Count, you have great things to do—Levez vous, Monsieur Le Comte, vous avez de grandes choses à faire." Napoleon's celebrated demand from the Institute, of an estimate of the progress of science, seems to have fired his ambition to be the lord of the intellectual, as his master desired to be lord of the physical world. He established at his house assemblages of scientific men, and of the leaders in every department of intellectual exertion, assuming the position of the great philosophic generalizer, who employed them as his workers in the several details, and reserved for himself the higher task of bringing together in systematic array the results of their several labours. By his profuse hospitality he reduced himself to penury. But this change did not seem to give him much concern, as it was part of his project to experimentalize in his own per-

son on all the conditions of humanity. For this purpose he practised all the vices, alternating them in proper scientific rotation with all the virtues, and his experience of poverty came at the right time to afford a contrast with the luxury and profusion in which he had been indulging. Among his other eccentricities, he attempted on one occasion to commit suicide, but only succeeded in blowing out one of his eyes. It was immediately after this that, as if the shock had electrified him, his social system discovered itself to him in a single intuition, and enabled him to announce himself as the divine man, saying, "Moses has promised to men universal fraternity, Jesus Christ has prepared it, St Simon has realized it." It presented itself to his view as the completion of that circle of the sciences which he considered that he had been employed in systematizing. In this respect it in some measure anticipated, and no doubt it suggested, the system of Positivism developed by Comte. They have the common features that, beginning with what are termed the exact sciences, they try to prove that each of the other sciences is made certain by the discovery and application of its laws, and to carry up this certainty gradually to the more complex and in popular belief dubious, sciences, until it reaches sociology, when the rules by which men must be organized can be set forth with abstract certainty. But the two philosophers differed greatly in this—that while Comte felt his way with a rigorous scrutiny, and was obliged to stop on the borders of the sciences into which he could carry strict laws, rather indicating how certainty was, as the result of man's progressive labours, to characterize the whole, St Simon at once found his way to a certain or positive system of social organization, paying little heed to the steps necessary for reaching this congenial ground through the less inviting medium of the other sciences. His plan was thoroughly hierarchical. It was a religion to which all things were to be subservient, and of which he, and after him the ablest of his disciples, was to be the head. Property and all other conflicting institutions

were to be abolished, and nothing was to interfere with the leadership of the Father or supreme leader, whose authority was thus purely absolute. The abolition of competition, and the organization of labour on such a more fitting and effective scale as the superior wisdom of the St-Simonian priesthood would naturally suggest, was a portion of the system ; but the condition of the mass of the people had by no means that alluring prominence afterwards given to it, and the matter was all along viewed more from the right of their superiors to organize and govern them, than from the right of the working classes to privileges not possessed by them. The unholy bond of matrimony was to be abolished, and there was substituted for its restraints obedience to the sacred instincts of inclination, as directed by the unerring wisdom of the Supreme Father. The difficulties felt in giving any intelligible account of artificial projects in general, accumulate and thicken in a contemplation of the mystic ramifications of St-Simonianism, and perhaps the most satisfactory and clear explanation of it may be given in the words of Louis Blan, who, as a rival projector, may be supposed to speak with the scientific precision of the craft. He thus epitomizes the chief elements of St-Simonianism, "that industry should be regulated in obedience to an authority self-constituted, and the judge of its own legitimacy ; that production should be concentrated to excess, and its advantages portioned out in the ratio of merit ; that the transmission of property should be abolished, as well as that of offices ; that marriage, the legalization of adultery, should give place to the sovereignty of inclination and to the emancipation of pleasure ; that the empire of society should be substituted for that of the family.¹

It happens, not unfortunately, that no men are more clear-sighted to the anomalies of such projects than rival projectors ; and the literature of communism may be said to supply its own confutation by embodying a system in which

¹ *History of Ten Years*, i., 387.

each man demolishes what his neighbour has set up. Hence, to form an accurate notion of the transcendent absurdities of the St-Simonians we must read the lively narrative of the author of the *Organization of Labour*, who, while the St-Simonians held that rewards should be distributed according to ability and merit, maintained the fundamentally opposite doctrine that people should be supplied not according to their abilities, but their needs. In his narrative it will be seen how Father Enfantin took the chief command, to which he was called by the commanding beauty of his person, his persuasive abilities, and his incomparable impudence. It will be seen how, as supreme judge of the world in matters both spiritual and temporal, he summoned Louis Philippe the king of the French to appear before him, and answer for his usurpation of the authority of the "supreme father," and other misdeeds. Though restricted in extent, however, it would appear that among his own followers, called "the Family," the sway of the supreme father was as despotic as that of any eastern potentate; and the power of compulsion possessed and wielded by him, is another instance of that capacity of enforcement for temporal purposes which religious adhesion so signally affords. Like all human authority, however, even Enfantin's was subject to rebellious antagonism, and within the college, or the cabinet as it might be termed, of the supreme father, there was a formidable conflict in the autumn of 1831. Though this high matter of state was kept secret from the family at large, yet we are told that "from the wearied step of the members of the college, from their worn and pallid faces which gave manifest evidence of sleepless and anxious nights, from their white lips, from the wild disorder of their remarks, from the mystery with which they carefully surrounded their proceedings, the members of the second degree saw that some terrible drama was going forward."¹

The insurrection was headed by Bazard, chief of the dogma department of the college, who not only was united

¹ *Ib. i.*, 568.

to a wife, over whom he wished to continue exclusive possession, but also desired to have his daughter married according to the usual formalities of French law and custom. As the supreme father was inexorable both on this and other points, there was a considerable secession from the Family. The next great incident in their history is the dispersal of their college of Menilmontant, and the trial and condemnation of their chiefs, as propagators of immorality and irreligion. They marched to the tribunal in procession, clothed in the solemn costume of their order—a blue robe with a leathern girdle, white trousers, a red cap, the neck bare, and a flowing beard. The picturesqueness of the whole scene, and the reverential awe and passive obedience enjoyed by the supreme father, naturally created much sensation in the Parisian world; but even the French toleration of the bombast was outraged, when Enfantin stood gazing at the court, calling attention to his own handsome face and commanding figure, and demanding for them the homage due to such advantages. The supreme father, and his disciples Duverier and Michael Chevalier, were each subjected to a year's imprisonment, and a fine of 100 francs. Two others, Rodriguez and Barault, were fined fifty francs each. The Family were dispersed to diffuse their system in a modified shape, and mystic St-Simonianism gradually yielded to the more attractive views of its historian.

The three great living representatives of French projects of organization are Auguste Comte, C.J. Prudhon, and Louis Blanc. Both in his works, and in his personal history, each of them has marked individual characteristics, which give them a dissimilarity to each other, more immediately and prominently obvious than the differences in the views of their predecessors. The first is laborious, repulsive, and calm, pursuing his system of inquiry to startling and offensive conclusions, such as the non-existence of a deity, with the most arid deliberativeness. The other two are impulsive and passionate; but Louis Blanc seizes a popular key note, and goes right

to the feelings and interests of the humbler and uneducated classes with a sort of sympathetic respect for all that men venerate in the shape of religion or the domestic affections, leaving to them all these undiminished, while he offers them other substantial blessings ; while Prudhon lifts his voice with savage ferocity against every object of human veneration, and endeavours to break every bond tending to the preservation of order and morality.

Perhaps it is scarcely just to rank Comte as one of the artificial organizers, since his system rather pointed to a future organization as the result of the growth of Positivism ; and in reality the vast progress in the development of mankind which he represents as the necessary preliminary to the acquisition of socialistic science, is a practical censure on the crude and ephemeral designs which propose an immediate decomposition and reconstruction of society. The aim of his positive system is to show that mankind possess the means of gradually acquiring as certain a command over the whole field of thought and action as they at present possess over the exact sciences. In these, so far as the human intellect has worked, there is an absolute and satisfying certainty, which leaves no room for difference of opinion or for intellectual anarchy. To astronomy, comprehending the grandest operations of the physical world, the same certainty has been applied, and the motions, distances, and sizes of the heavenly bodies have been adjusted with an absolute-ness which leaves for opposition or scepticism no possible foundation. Passing through the other sciences with extraordinary labour and ingenious acuteness, he endeavours to show that they possess the elements of the same sort of certain laws, and that these will in time be developed, the development being much aided and accelerated by his own discovery of the positive system of philosophy. In the physical system his chief difficulty lies in biology, or the laws of animal and vegetable life ; and after seeing and admiring the fragments as it were of certainty which he brings out of

mechanics and even chemistry, the contrast of struggling difficulty exhibited in this department tells its own tale of caution to human presumption. The last of all the sciences to be subjected to supreme human intellect by the discovery and development of its absolute laws is sociology. This is to be the science whereby men are to be governed and directed in all their conduct and relations, with an assured conformity to the laws of their nature ; a conformity as assured, for instance, as that by which man already regulates any of the portions of physical nature, such as steam, over which the progress of science has already given him control. We have thus an imperfect type of the certainty with which man may be governed, in the regulation of a steam-engine and its machinery by a highly competent engineer.

The prospect which this certainty held out to the mass of the people, supposing them possessed of patience to follow Comte's long deductions, was not flattering. It annihilates freedom of action and opinion. The world will be under the absolute despotism of the intellects which can grasp the greatest quantity of the positive science of sociology, as the pupils of a mathematical class are, in the matter of mathematics, entirely subjected to the teacher who knows so much more than they do. But it is to be a despotism to which people will willingly submit, because it is certain and irremediable as fate. The man destined for the humbler duties of life will never struggle against his destiny, for he will feel that he occupies the inferior position, by a law as fixed and immutable as that which makes the fern smaller than the oak, and the sheep less powerful than the tiger. It must at least be conceded to Comte that he does not appeal to vulgar prejudices. His atheism is reiterated so pertinaciously and prominently, and is so closely connected with his denial of the possible exercise of a will in the organization of the world, that it must necessarily be mentioned by every one who notices his system. But some of his ad-

mirers have thought that a more legitimate result of his system is the secondary argument for the existence of a deity, from the perfection with which he shows the world to be governed.

Hitherto we have found in the framers of artificial systems, either abstract philosophers whose works are unsuited to popular taste, or inventors of vast plans in which the people at large did not see any distinct and immediate prospect of participating. To Louis Blanc has fallen the lot of striking the key note of popular enthusiasm. He avoided the features on which his predecessors had offensively dwelt,—the necessity of subjection to the true laws of social organization, and the duty of those destined to the humbler grades of the human hierarchy to occupy them without repining. With the instinct of the genuine demagogue, he told them solely of the wealth they were to gain, not of the liberty they were to lose. The fervid eloquence of his *Organisation du Travail* luxuriated in a theme which can never fail to be attractive—the spoliation of the poor by the affluent, and the right of restitution which the humbler classes possess against their more fortunate neighbours. His views are expressed with a pleasing eloquence and a touching earnestness, which make the perusal of the book agreeable even to those who see from the beginning the monstrous and almost incredible paradoxes on which the reasonings are founded. That competition is ruinous to the working classes, and not even propitious to their employers, may be called his fundamental principle. He attacks it in various ways ; it is selfish and demoralizing, rendering men sordid and jealous—it produces unfair inequalities in the distribution of the produce of industry—it has several other grave defects, but its grand offence is its potency for the destruction of the working classes. The following brief extract will perhaps show as distinctly as a fuller exposition, the extreme nature of his views. “A contractor requires a workman—three present themselves for

his selection. ‘How much wages do you want?’ he says to one. ‘Three francs—I have a wife and children.’ ‘So, so—and you?’ ‘Two francs and a half—I have no children, but I have a wife.’ ‘Very well—and you?’ ‘Two francs will do with me—I am a bachelor.’ ‘Then you get the job.’ It is done—the bargain is made; and what is to become of the two excluded workmen?—it is to be hoped that they will permit themselves to die of famine. But what if they should become robbers? Don’t be afraid—we have a police. Or assassins? Why we have the hangman.”¹ In this country the answer which would at once be made to this, both by theoretic reasoning and by facts, is, that competition induces the man who requires three francs to work up to their value: and it is at the same time very certain to all who know the general proportion which the profit of capital bears to the wages of labour, that if the unburdened workman’s labour is only worth two francs there is no possible fund out of which three francs can be paid to the burdened fellow-workman who requires them. It is competition that creates the fund out of which high wages are paid, and those who would abolish it because it makes an unequal distribution of the realized fund, would not have that fund at all to distribute.

He endeavours to show that competition is injurious to trade, since it must necessarily bring things into existence which are supernumerary. The process is the same as that which leads to the starvation of the workmen. A man

¹ “Un entrepreneur a besoin d’un ouvrier: trois se présentent. ‘Combien pour votre travail?’ ‘Trois francs—j’ai une femme et des enfants.’ ‘Bien. Et vous?’ ‘Deux francs et demi—je n’ai pas d’enfants, mais j’ai une femme.’ ‘A merveille. Et vous?’ ‘Deux francs me suffiront—je suis seul.’ ‘A vous donc la préférence.’ C’en est fait: le marché est conclu! Que deviendront les deux prolétaires exclus? Ils se laisseront mourir de faim, il faut l’espérer. Mais s’ils allaient se faire voleurs? Ne craignez rien, nous avons des gens d’armes. Et assassins? Nous avons le bourreau.”—*Organisation du Travail*, p. 43. Bruxelles, 1843.

wants a commodity—three manufacturers competing with each other make triplicates of it—he selects that which is offered at the lowest price, and the other two are lost. It is almost needless to say that, though the supply sometimes does outrun the demand, yet the general object of producers collectively is to produce no more of any commodity than what will find a market; and though they may not be perfect judges of the quantity, they are undoubtedly rendered by self-interest the best that can be found. But the whole large branch of competition which operates through tender and acceptance is overlooked in Louis Blanc's argument. His statement of facts would be exemplified if, when a man wants a house of a peculiar shape, two or three architects build according to his plan, in the hope that one will be accepted; or when a new judge takes his seat, all the tailors of London set to making robes, one only of which can have the good fortune to be of use. But when individual commodities are required, either there is a reliance on the prices adjusted by ordinary competition, or there is a special competition by previous tender. The service of the post-office is often referred to by Louis Blanc as an instance of organized labour from which competition is excluded; but it is far otherwise. There are contracts for carrying the letters from place to place; there is competition for the construction of the vehicles and other facilities for locomotion, whether under the direct control of the post-office authorities or in the hands of those who contract with them; and finally, among the various persons employed there is the usual competition to obtain as much remuneration as possible, while the government, relying on the same spirit, endeavours to obtain the greatest amount of service for its outlay. The army is another department loudly appealed to as an instance of the accomplishment of the greatest objects through organization without competition. But it is for destruction alone that organization here suffices. The productive part of the army service—the supply of food,

apparel, barracks, and weapons—is the object of ordinary competition.

His ultimate project was to substitute a perfect system of state organization for the imperfect and pernicious system of employment and competition. At the time when his work was published, however, the state was a monarchy, of whose abuses he had himself made many a bitter exposure. Having therefore considered that state management had, in the experience of the world, always tended to abuse and inequality, he admitted that his system could not be committed to any state such as had existed among mankind. The first step must be the establishment of a perfectly pure democracy, which would have the interests of all impartially at heart. This once done, the organization of labour might be carried out. To make the change adjust itself to existing interests, he proposed to make the competitive efforts of the state, in the first place, absorb all other competition.

The state was to begin by raising a loan to establish a limited number of workshops in each department of industry. In these establishments government should regulate the functions and gradations of the men; but after a time, when they became acquainted with each other, and with the principle of co-operation, they would adjust their own social hierarchy on the elective system. From the commencement the men would be allowed wages or subsistence money. The profits being struck at the end of the year, would be divided into four parts. One would be a sinking fund for the repayment of the capital,—though it is difficult to see how, when the system fully developed itself, there should be any person in a position to receive payment of capital; another fourth would be divided among the men; the third would go to found an hospital for the sick and infirm; and the last would be retained as a reserve for special purposes.

By the perfection of their management, their extensive capital, and their general popularity, these national workshops would gradually drive private establishments out

of the field, and, enlarging themselves, fill the place occupied by them. But, as this competition would be worked by a perfectly benevolent, pure, and conscientious government, it would be deformed by none of the exterminating defects of the ordinary competitive system, and one of its principles should be, that its pressure be as gentle as may be consistent with its effectiveness. In a short time all private competition would be vanquished, and the organization of every department of labour would be vested in the state, to be regulated with that perfect wisdom and justice of which the state, as formed by Louis Blanc, would be certainly possessed.

It is the policy of Louis Blanc to find fault with nothing in the existing social and moral condition of things beyond that portion of them which must be superseded to admit of his own favourite plan for the organization of labour. Hence, in his endeavours to engraft his novel projects on the ordinary institutions of society, and to prove their superiority over what they displace by arguments founded on mere ordinary utility and profit, he renders his fallacies much more palpable than those of his contemporary Prudhon, who, proposing to demolish every existing institution and belief, sets arguments of a merely utilitarian character at defiance, and challenges a contest on a wider and more fundamental ground. But of the two, the paradoxes stated with so much deference to received opinions, and with so much amiable benevolence proved far more calamitous than the vast revolutions of Prudhon, which, suggested by a relentless hatred of all that men have been accustomed to love and revere, have carried with them their own practical confutation to the greater portion of those who have read them. Without examining more minutely Prudhon's system, it is appropriate to the point immediately under consideration to show that his practical conclusions are directly the reverse of those of Louis Blanc, whom, after the usual method of organic social reformers when speaking of each other's plans,

he lashes with condign ridicule. Gathering up all the physical and moral wealth of which the rights of property and other human institutions have robbed mankind, Prudhon seems to advocate a distribution according to each human being's contributions as a productive worker to the riches of the world. With his usual felicity of illustration, he compares the man who obtains, by property, office, or in any other shape, more than the proportion corresponding with his exertions, to a reaper who receives a loaf for cutting an ear of corn.

On the other hand, Louis Blanc's principle of distribution is, that men should receive not according to their capacities or exertions, but their needs; and the whole object of his organization of labour, both in its theoretic form, and when afterwards, as one of the provisional government of 1848, he endeavoured to put it in practice, was to carry out this result. In his national workshops, all competition, all rivalry, all selfishness, were to be dead. Each man on a principle of honour was to perform his assigned duty—the distribution of the proceeds was to be a separate operation, proceeding on grounds totally distinct from the comparative services of the producers.

A suspicion is suggested by the tone of some parts of the *Organisation du Travail*—which will be confirmed by a perusal of its author's clever History of Ten Years of the reign of Louis Philippe—that his strong hatred of competition rests on opinions, or more properly speaking impulses, totally different from those economical arguments on which he professes to found them. In treating of the working classes, he always speaks of them as mere mute instruments who must take, collectively, the position which the capitalists, or—when they are superseded—the predominant party in the state, assign to them; and he never makes allowance for energy or activity promoting an improvement in their condition. In his History he complains of their becoming selfish and sordid, and accumulating money in the savings-banks during the early prosperous years of Louis Philippe's reign.

These indications of a feeling that the working classes are a mere inanimate mass at the command of organizers, are accompanied by unmistakeable references to the time of conquest, aggression, and tyranny, as that of the true glory of France, and bitter allusions to the sordid spirit of peaceful productive industry, which has been the source of British greatness. He refers repeatedly to the admitted prosperity and influence which Britain has achieved by the spirit of commercial competition, pointing out what France must accomplish to excel us in such a race, and pointing it out in a tone of deprecatory despondency. It is clear that the predominating influence which has produced his mischievous books is, that in a struggle with Britain for national superiority, the chance for his own country is not in directing her people to industrial productiveness, but in abandoning competition and peaceful wealth, and assuming an organization which, as in the days of Napoleon's greatest achievements, will place all France in array against any nation competing with her for the supremacy of the world. That, in short, the best chance for France being great and formidable is not by producing wealth, but by destroying the wealth created by others.

The opinions of the *Organisation du Travail* spread rapidly among the Parisian workmen, and those of the larger provincial towns. Many other works promulgating views of the same kind were eagerly devoured, and even the more abstruse and forbidding treatises of previous organizers were received into favour, as being so far on the side of the abolitionists, that they were against property and other existing institutions. Thus a large body of men radiated from central Paris through all the populous portions of France, whose opinions on government were not merely republican as against monarchy, but were communistic or socialistic as against property and other social institutions.

It belongs rather to the history of France than to the immediate object of this paper to describe the influence of

these far-spread opinions on the eventful history of the year 1848. Among those who had obtained a popular position in the common arena of politics, the provisional government of France included Louis Blanc, and others for whom power was demanded, rather on account of their anti-economic than their anti-regal opinions. Between the merely political republicans on the one hand, and the communists and socialists on the other, there was a long conflict which it required a stronger party than either to put down. The miseries of the period of conflict, and the subsequent subjugation of France, were the legitimate fruit of the doctrines which Louis Blanc, Prudhon, and other writers had been promulgating. Strongly represented as they were in the provisional government, they could not obtain a direct practical adoption of their principles as the universal law of France. They obtained, however, general resolutions from the provisional government, importing that an end must be put to the sufferings of the labouring classes, and that they ought to be guaranteed the legitimate fruits of their labour. The committee of the Luxembourg was at the same time appointed, with Louis Blanc at its head, to consider the condition of the workmen. The object of the majority of the provisional government was in this shape to get rid of the whole question by making it a mere matter of inquiry. The object of M. Blanc and his friends was to make the committee a means of action rather than of mere investigation. They succeeded, at least, so far as to induce a vast body of workmen to look to them for a regeneration of their lot, and abandon all projects of honest industry. A portion of these were employed, neither to their own satisfaction nor to the benefit of the community, in national workshops where all were paid alike. The idle, who constituted the majority, admired the system. In the hotel Clichy a special experiment was tried on a government order for the uniforms of the Garde Mobile. Fifteen hundred tailors were assembled, with an establishment of foremen, clerks, and cutters. The sum at which an

army contractor would during the monarchy have furnished the dresses having been set down as their proper price, the men were allowed two francs a-day as subsistence money while they worked, and were in the end to obtain the balance equally divided among them. But when the day of reckoning came, it was found that not only was there no balance of gain, but that there was loss, and that the two francs a-day of subsistence money—the lowest rate of wages paid by master tailors—had overpaid the men for the work actually done by them under the mere impulse of “liberty, equality, and fraternity.” Their energies, unexcited by the spirit of competition, relaxed when each man found that the proceeds of his increased exertions were not to be received by himself alone, but to be distributed over the whole body of 1500 fellow-workmen.

It is the peculiarity of all great systems of social organization, that when they are put in practice and fail, the failure is attributed to the imperfect character of the experiment. Louis Blanc and his friends have ever maintained that the reason why the efforts to put his projects in force in 1848 failed, was because they were imperfectly and not completely tried. The circumstances under which he fled from France, and his contributions to the socialist press of England, indicate that he purposed to carry out his system by force, when it was seen that the majority of the suffrages of the people were against it. A true fanatic to his views, he held that the popular mind had been impregnated with false principles by the corrupt system of employment and competition; and that, to afford a fair field for the true system, it was necessary in the first place to use the power possessed by the wielders of supreme authority in France to carry it out by force. He readily—like all protesters against tyranny who are going to commit a flagrant act of coercion—found an excuse for his conduct in the necessity soundly to indoctrinate the people, and enable them to appreciate the truth.

The manner in which the communist and socialist doctrines spread through Europe, and were suppressed in France as well as elsewhere, forms one of the most memorable chapters in late European history. It has only to be noticed that, while the public organs of these opinions have been suddenly silenced on the Continent, no one can at this moment say how far the opinions themselves may be undermining the governments which appear to keep them down, and the whole order of society. In our own country we know with fortunate distinctness how the matter stands, and, as the following explanation will show, we have to thank the freedom of the press for a feeling of security of which other nations are lamentably deficient.

Socialistic and communistic notions, though they have sometimes been very prevalent in Britain, have never enlisted any great amount of intellect, either in devising or promulgating them. The few stray writers who have gone beyond a sentimental and hesitating sympathy with the views of the continental communists have belonged to a totally different class in the intellectual hierarchy from those men who have by their genius and fervid eloquence from time to time convulsed the public mind of France. The name of Robert Owen stands supreme as the prophet and champion of British communism. But, though his position is thus lofty with relation to his peculiar department, he is a man of very moderate literary abilities. A continued perseverance in one tone, an undying sanguineness which made him speak with the assurance of success at the time when the prospects of his cause were at the extremity of hopelessness, and an entire reliance on his own infallibility, have been the qualities which, more than once in the course of his long life, have procured him an attentive hearing from a considerable portion of the public.

The conditions under which he first appealed to public sympathy were favourable to his demands, since he advocated the cause of a portion of society to which the social institu-

tions of the age failed to communicate their organizing influence. The inventions of Hargreaves and Arkwright had just given their impulse to the manufacturing system. By the creation of cotton mills in districts which had been but thinly peopled, a portion of the people were dragged out of the bosom of ordinary society and all the organizing principles which had arisen with its slow growth, and were chaotically massed together in large groups, without the application of any sanction to replace those influences which they had left behind them, in the shape of ecclesiastical membership, corporate or parochial supervision, the genial control of hereditary neighbours, and the family ties. In Scotland the social revolution was signally conspicuous and disastrous. The cheapness of labour in that part of the empire, and the geological facilities for obtaining water power, attracted English manufacturing capital northwards, and often in some solitary glen several hundreds of persons were at once set down as mere producing machines, without any consideration for their moral condition or any effort to supply for them those elements of social organization which, naturally of slow growth, cannot be voted and adopted at once by a working population even had they knowledge enough to be aware of their necessity.

Owen was himself practically engaged in manufactures, and the first revelations of his system came to the English public with all that authority which disinterested benevolence, supported by practical sagacity, is sure to command. So in the year 1815, in a tract called "Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System, with Hints for the Improvement of those parts of it which are most injurious to Health and Morals," we may read the following excellent remarks :—

"In the manufacturing districts it is common for parents to send their children of both sexes, at seven or eight years of age, in winter as well as summer, at six o'clock in the morning, sometimes of course in the dark, and occasionally

amidst frost and snow, to enter the manufactories, which are often heated to a high temperature, and contain an atmosphere far from being the most favourable to human life, and in which all those employed in them very frequently continue until twelve o'clock at noon, when an hour is allowed for dinner, after which they return to remain, in a majority of cases, till eight o'clock at night.

"The children now find they must labour incessantly for their bare subsistence ; they have not been used to innocent, healthy, and rational amusements ; they are not permitted the requisite time if they had been previously accustomed to enjoy them. They know not what relaxation means, except by the actual cessation from labour. They are surrounded by others similarly circumstanced with themselves ; and thus passing on from childhood to youth, they become gradually initiated, the young men in particular, but often the young females also, in the seductive pleasures of the pot-house and inebriation, for which their daily hard labour, want of better habits, and the general vacuity of their minds tend to prepare them.

"Such a system of training cannot be expected to produce any other than a population weak in bodily and mental faculties, and with habits generally destructive of their own comforts and the well-being of those around them, and strongly calculated to subdue all the social affections. Man so circumstanced sees all around him hurrying forward at a mail-coach speed to acquire individual wealth, regardless of him, his comforts, his wants, or even his sufferings, except by way of a degrading parish charity, fitted only to steel the heart of man against his fellows, or to form the tyrant and the slave. To-day he labours for one master, to-morrow for a second, then for a third, and a fourth, until all ties between employers and employed are frittered down to the consideration of what immediate gain each can derive from the other. The employer regards the employed as mere instruments of gain, while these acquire a gross ferocity of character,

which, if legislative measures shall not be judiciously devised to prevent its increase, and ameliorate the condition of this class, will sooner or later plunge the country into a formidable and perhaps inextricable state of danger."

This was new to the world in the year 1815, and the best testimony that it was not only new but true and valuable, is to be found in the too frequent repetition of the same causes of complaint down to the present day, uttered with a general similarity of tone which makes these sentences scarcely seem obsolete or antiquated after the lapse of forty years.

But when a few such apt elucidations are culled from Owen's earlier works, it is easily perceived that their merits are exhausted ; and through the tremendous voluminousness of his writings during the ensuing forty years, we may wade in vain, finding nothing at the utmost better than an exhausted repetition, after many years, of some judicious sentiment to be found in his early pamphlets. That Owen was connected with a manufactory, the organization in which contrasted with such descriptions, was a very well known fact, which gave much emphasis to his writings. But it must be questioned whether any great portion of either the practical or theoretical wisdom of which he has obtained the merit was his own. The New Lanark cotton mill, with which Owen's name has long been associated, was founded in the year 1784 by Mr David Dale. Owen married his daughter, and thus succeeded to a patrimonial interest in the establishment. In the multifarious works in which he has proclaimed his own merits, he occasionally, but very rarely, mentions the organizing efforts of Mr Dale as a sort of introduction to his own. It is known, however, that Mr Dale was the author of at least a very large proportion of the practical arrangements in the New Lanark mill ; and when it is mentioned that he is not known to have ever solicited public attention to his exertions, while Mr Owen has been an incessant prater about himself, his services, and his projects, for half a century, it may be conjectured that

his practical footing in a well-organized manufactory was made for him. In fact, though he professes to have found his predecessor struggling by imperfect remedies with social difficulties which he himself afterwards overcame through means of his peculiar solvent, there is no doubt that all that was beneficially and judiciously effected at New Lanark was the doing of Mr Dale. Owen had at least sense enough to see the usefulness of his arrangements, and to improve on them. Whether by his own talent, or from the instructions of his father-in-law, he could generalize on the lesson taught by the defects of the ordinary manufactory system in the manner of the passage quoted above ; and thus, being a vain good humoured man, frivolous and fond of popularity, it fell to his lot to acquire a very high reputation, as a social philosopher who had accomplished the unwonted feat of putting his theories into practice. The New Lanark mills were for some years deemed one of the wonders of the world, and no member of a royal house, or illustrious stranger travelling in Scotland, failed to visit them. Owen when he went to London delivered addresses in Exeter Hall, at which members of the royal family thought they were doing a public duty by attending ; and it was at one time rumoured that the Duke of Kent intended to give the princess who is now the queen of the British empire the benefit of instructions, in social science, by Robert Owen. Among the many foreign tributes to his popularity, was the offer of a province in Texas where he might carry out his system much more freely than he could in the New Lanark mills, but he declined the banishment involved in such an arrangement.

As time passed, however, the practical base on which Owen appeared to found his system was seen to slip from beneath him. His partners in the New Lanark mill found it necessary to buy him off. He was continually writing papers explaining how the human race had heretofore been left in ignorance, darkness, and misery, which he possessed, by the establishment of his “ Rational System of Society,”

the means of immediately correcting. He indicated his opinion that the New Lanark works had reached successfully two points out of twenty which were necessary to perfectibility; and some of his partners who appeared to be well contented with the pecuniary results of the undertaking, afraid that Owen might defeat them by attempts to carry out a portion of the remaining eighteen points, resolved if possible to be rid of him.

With the capital which he drew out of the concern—a considerable sum—Owen immediately projected an establishment in more entire conformity with his now matured system. The place selected was Orbiston in Lanarkshire, where a great parallelogram was to be erected, that being the only form of edifice in which the perfect uniformity of organization which was to reign throughout the administration would have its proper development. The edifice was commenced in 1825, and Owen's own funds were sufficient to build a portion of it. Of the whole sum necessary, however, which he fixed at L.96,000, so small a proportion was available that only one angle of the parallelogram was completed. In this mutilated shape it was of course impossible that the social organization dependent on the parallelogram form could be developed. Nearly two hundred inmates occupied it for some time, but they lived with so little of the promised harmony of The New Moral World, that the country people called the place Babel.

It was treated as a great moral nuisance, and the society soon breaking up, the building was levelled with the ground, much to the satisfaction of the neighbourhood. By this time, indeed, Owen had turned the tide of popular feeling against him by views calculated to be extremely offensive. Among his observations on the habits of the manufacturing population, he had laid it down that in their moral constitution vice and superstition alternated. To a person coming, as he did, from England, into close contact with the most unrestrained section of the Scottish population, the rigidness of

the Calvinistic principles of the people would naturally appear in startling and unpleasing contrast with their deep vices. To fathom the depths of such a social system, and adjust the proper remedies, required a stronger judgment than Owen's, and a less presumptuous will. He immediately began an unequal theological contest, in which he omitted nothing that could rouse the jealousy and indignation of the clergy, or shock the prejudices of the people. He was not only to be the lawgiver, but the prophet of his system, establishing in it a new rational religion of his own; and though he did not require a communion of wives as well as a communion of goods, yet he made the marriage tie dissolvable with alarming facility.

On the other hand, the supporters of free political institutions were alarmed by the complex official hierarchy which was to rule with absolute power. It is true that there was in the eyes of its constructor a perfectly efficient check on tyranny, injustice, and rapacity, but it was not sufficient to convince the rest of the world. It arose from the perfection of nature which men would obtain under the rational system of society—their entire divestiture of all human passions and prejudices. These expectations, along with assurances that every human being would possess under the new system an abundance of everything desirable to an inhabitant of the world, were conveyed in unceasing streams of such mellifluous prophecies as the following:—

“ In these separate societies there will be no contest or competition between the members; nor yet will there be any between the societies, however near or distant or numerous they may be . . . all will be trained and educated to acquire the greatest amount of useful and valuable knowledge; and then possessing the spirit of charity, kindness, and love for all their fellows, which spirit will be given to them by their new mode of instruction from birth,—all will of necessity feel the greatest desire to aid and assist each other to the full extent of their powers, and their

greatest pleasure will arise from being thus occupied. There will also be in *each* of these societies the due proportion of manufactures, trades, and commerce, for the number of members and their wants; but manufactures, trades, and commerce will be established and conducted on principles very different to those prevalent throughout present society.

. . . In this manner will these societies, being always supplied with the latest and best machinery for performing whatever it can be made to well execute, produce the greatest amount of the most valuable wealth in the shortest time and in the best manner, so as to produce health and enjoyment to all while engaged in the department of production."¹

Owen appeared to have obtained another and a still more satisfactory opportunity of attesting his principles in the year 1843. The communists and socialists, acting under the impulses to be presently mentioned, had collected a considerable sum of money, and resolved to centralize their societies under the authority of a congress, which was to meet in Harmony Hall, an edifice built by them in Hampshire, to serve both as a central office for socialist organization, and a model for other quadrangular establishments. Here, on the 10th of May, Mr Owen was solemnly chosen President of the Congress. From that time, in the official organs of his sect, we find him making progresses among the provincial establishments, like a sovereign inspecting the several local institutions of his realm; and it would be recorded that he visited the Concordium, and after having inspected the premises, was presented with an address by the Pater and Elder, and was entertained by the whole family at dinner.

But it soon turned out that a total difference of view lay between Owen and his supporters. He, ever looking to the broad measures of universal human regeneration over which he had been now for several years a theoretic dreamer,

¹ *The Book of the New Moral World, explanatory of the Elements of the Science of Society*, by Robert Owen, I., t. xi., p. 19.

contemplated only the blessings which the world was to reap from an entire social regeneration, while his disciples were bent on obtaining personal advantages from the immediate application of its principles. These they did not find at Harmony Hall, and they consequently deposed their chief. The history of the new race of communists and socialists, who had thus lost all respect for the patriarch of their sect, must be briefly given.

While the policy of protection to native agriculture and other interests prevailed, and the Apprentice Act, with various corporate restrictions on labour, was in full observance, the workman, far from being taught that he must depend on his own industry and prudence, was led to expect that the state would take care of him. It professed to protect the landed and farming interest, the shipping interest, and various other separate interests. It did not entirely neglect the workman. By acts for restraining the introduction of foreign silk and cotton goods, and by various other legislative efforts, he was professedly protected. Still, while the landowner, the farmer, the shipowner, and the master-manufacturer were rich, he was poor and miserable. He maintained, therefore, that what the state had done for them it had not done for him, and he hailed the doctrines of the communists and socialists as affording him a more entire and effective protection. Hence those principles had spread so widely from the passing of the Reform Bill downwards as to create much alarm. While some wisely considered that free discussion, and the remedy of admitted evils, would be the best cure for this social disease; others proposed a resort to coercion. On the 20th of January 1840, the Bishop of Exeter asked in the House of Lords if the government had taken any steps to repress the progress of socialism, and was answered by Lord Normanby, the home secretary, that no such steps had been taken; but that, if the persons referred to were guilty of any offence, the proper proceedings would be adopted. On the 24th the bishop resumed the discussion, on the presentation of a petition by 40,000 of the

clergy, magistrates, merchants, and traders of Birmingham, praying their Lordships to interpose for the suppression of socialism. He stated that "Great Britain was divided into fourteen principal districts. A congress met annually, which assumed to itself legislative power for directing the whole proceedings of the general body. That congress assembled, he believed, at different points in different years. Two delegates were sent from all the places where there were charter branches of the society, not amounting to less than 61. There was besides an executive body, the Central Court. He did not know how often that met; but he believed it was in a constant state of capacity for meeting. That body superintended the formation of associations throughout the land, and appointed missionaries to each of the fourteen districts into which the United Kingdom was divided by the society. There were no fewer than 350 towns regularly visited by these missionaries."—Hansard's *Debates*.

The vehement and intolerant terms in which the bishop demanded the suppression of the offensive doctrines created an immediate reaction in their favour. Whatever amount of adhesion they had obtained was speedily increased, and several able periodicals for some time represented the opinions of various clusters of communists and socialists. Free discussion, however, and the known failure of the partial experiments which had occurred, accompanied by the abolition of the protective system, soon undermined any position which such doctrines had obtained in the public mind. The revolution of 1848 was followed by an expiring flash. The communistic periodicals, after a brief period of excitement and success, dropped one by one out of existence. There is at the present moment no known public organ of these systems in Britain; and while this has been the happy result of entire freedom of discussion, there can be little doubt that, in those nations where opinion has been coerced, a communistic spirit of the most dangerous kind still smoulders, ready, when an occasion offers itself, to burst forth in a consuming flame.

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